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G77-374 Seasonal Prices for Meat Animals

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Seasonal Prices for Meat Animals

Al Wellman, Extension Economist (Marketing)

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Seasonal variations in livestock prices seem to follow a similar pattern from year to year. For some classes of livestock, these seasonal swings in prices have been quite consistent for a number of years; while others have changed considerably over time.

Seasonal price fluctuations result mostly from seasonal supply changes or variations in marketings. For any given year a cyclical change in price may override the season pattern. Seasonal price changes during the 1972-76 period also were influenced by a price freeze, as well as changes in supply and demand.

Seasonal price changes are important factors to consider in planning or making adjustments in the management of a livestock production program or in developing marketing strategies.

The following charts present the average monthly variations in prices for several classes of livestock for the five-year period of 1972-76.

Slaughter Steers and Heifers

During the 1967-71 period the pattern for slaughter cattle was different from the 1972-76 average presented in *Figure 1*.

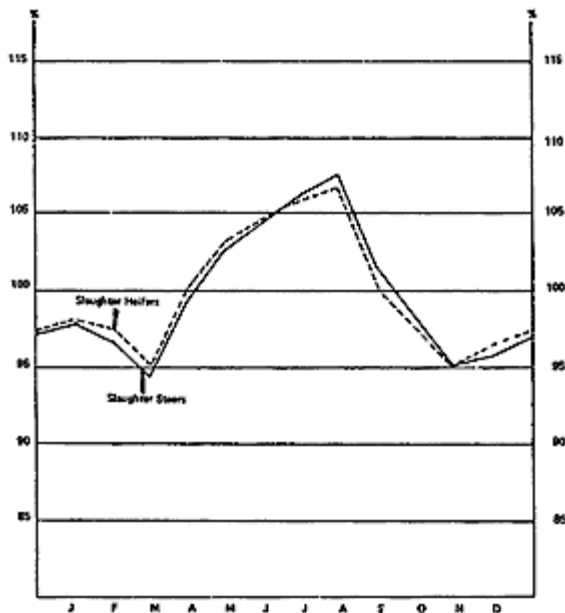


Figure 1. Slaughter steers, choice 1000-1300 pounds, and slaughter heifers, choice 900-1100 pounds, monthly average price as a percentage of annual average price (1972-76), Omaha.

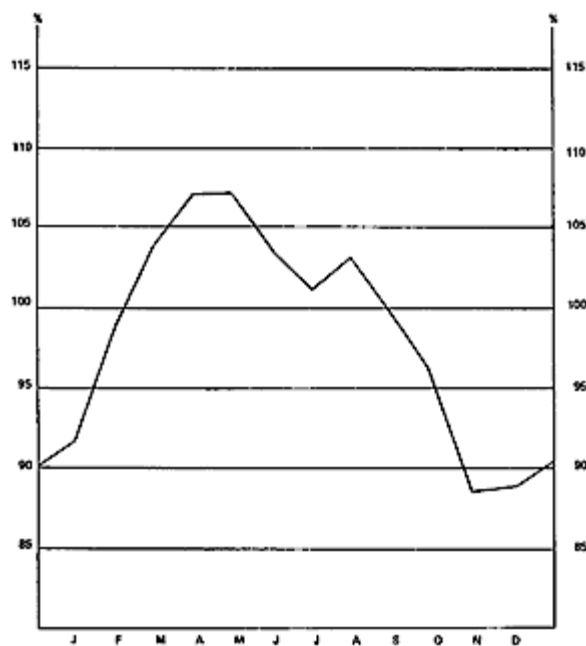


Figure 2. Slaughter cows, commercial, monthly average price as a percentage of annual average price (1972-76), Omaha.

For 1967-71, choice slaughter steer and heifer prices were highest in May, June and July with the low in October and November. For 1972-76, the high was in July and August and the low was in March and November.

With cattle feeding a year around business, adjustments can be made to increase or decrease marketing in any particular period. Consequently, the seasonal price pattern for slaughter cattle will continue to be somewhat unstable in the future.

Slaughter Cows

The seasonal trend in slaughter cow prices has been fairly consistent for the past several years (*Figure 2*). In the spring, when grass is available, marketings are low and prices usually are at their annual peak. During the 1972-76 period, the highest prices were in April and May and the low was in November and December. The magnitude of the change from the April-May high to the November-December low was considerably larger than in 1967-71.

Feeder Steers

The seasonal pattern for feeder steer prices seems to have changed in the 1972-76 period (*Figure 3*). The traditional spring highs and fall lows disappeared somewhat during this period. Seasonal price peaks were reached in May and August and lower prices were recorded in the winter months. Seasonal ties in feeder cattle prices in the future may continue to ignore the past because of ongoing changes in the cattle feeding industry.

Slaughter Hogs

Barrow and gilt prices have a more consistent seasonal pattern than slaughter cattle and the fluctuation from high to low has been wider (*Figure 4*). Slaughter hog prices took wider swings during the 1972-76 period than during 1967-71.

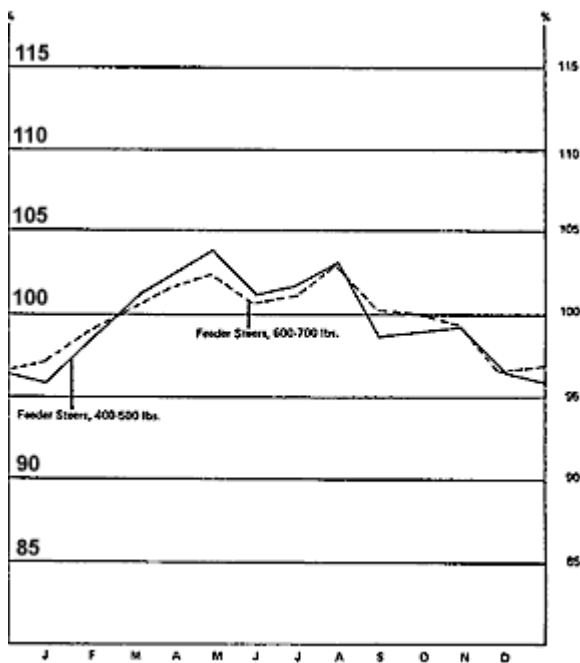


Figure 3. Feeder steers, choice 400-500 pounds and 600-700 pounds, monthly average price as a percentage of annual average price (1972-76), Omaha.

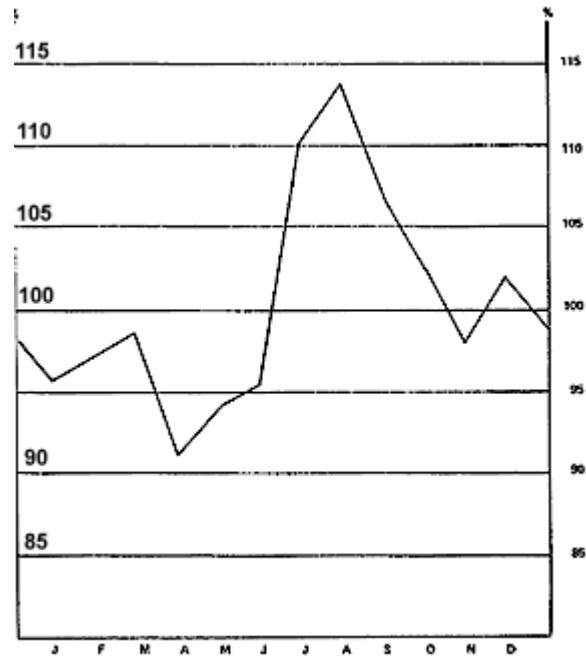


Figure 4. Barrows and gilts, U.S. No. 1 and 2, 200-300 pounds, monthly price as a percentage of annual average price.

During the 1967-71 period, February was the second highest price month during that five year period. The 1972-76 period retained a late winter peak, but it lost its second place status to December. Marketings during the winter months are probably reduced because of the problems that occur in confinement farrowing systems during extremely hot summer weather. April has been the low price month during the past five years.

Slaughter Sows

The seasonal price pattern for sows was similar to that of barrows and gilts (*Figure 5*). The major change is that slaughter sow prices were low in November, December and January during the 1972-76 period. During the 1967-71 period the low price occurred in April. During 1967-71 sow prices were highest in February, but the high shifted to the summer months in 1972-76.

Feeder Pigs

Quarterly feeder pig prices were used instead of monthly. Wide price fluctuations are common to feeder pigs (*Figure 6*). These price ups and downs closely follow slaughter hog prices and marketings.

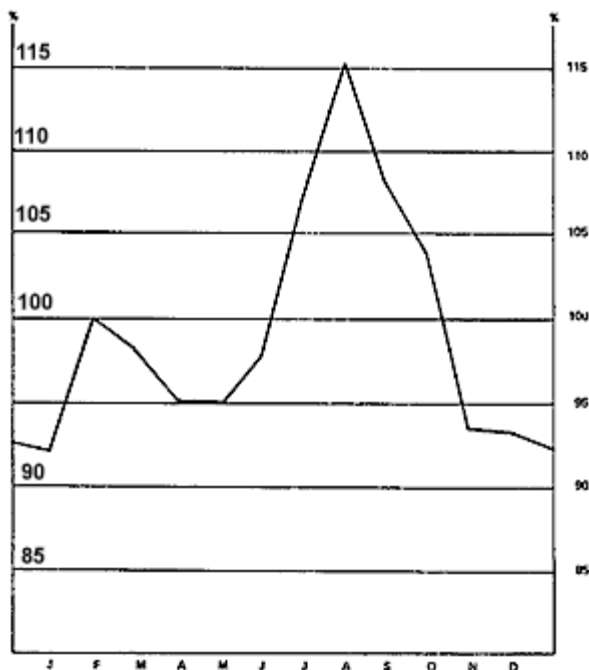


Figure 5. Sows, monthly average price as a percentage of annual average price (1972-76), Omaha.

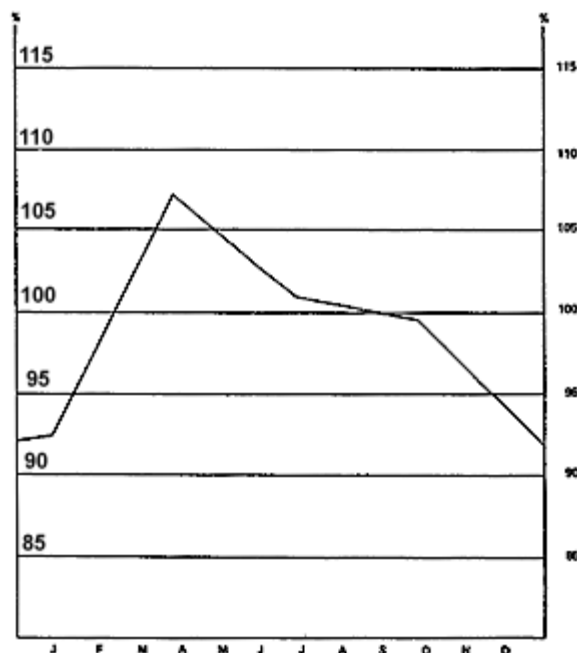


Figure 6. Feeder pigs, quarterly average price as a percentage of annual average price (1972-76), Omaha.

Feeder pig prices during 1972-76 were highest in the late winter and early spring in anticipation of the summer price peaks for slaughter hogs.

Slaughter Lambs

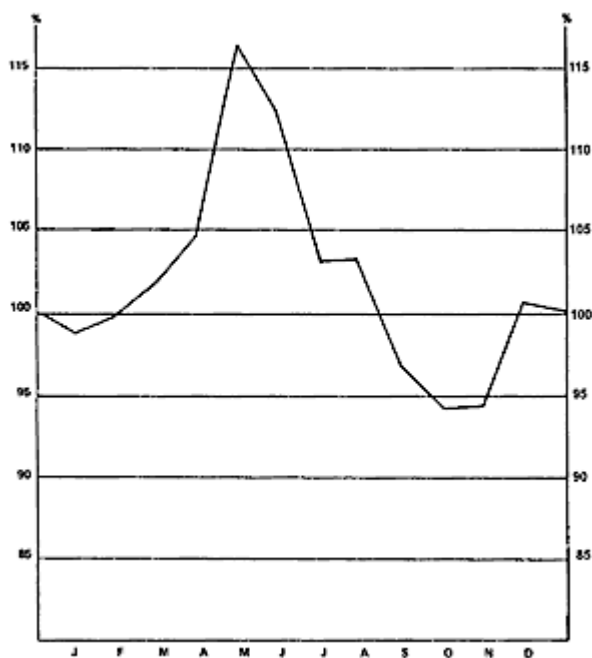


Figure 7. Slaughter lambs, monthly average price as a percentage of annual average price (1972-76), Omaha.

The general seasonal pattern for slaughter lamb prices has remained nearly the same for the past 25 years (*Figure 7*), although, during the 1972-76 period wider price fluctuations occurred than during 1967-71. Lamb prices were highest during April and May when the first spring lambs are marketed and the price bottoms are in the fall.

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